

critical digest

305 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.
BU 2-0326 T. M. KRAUS

Oct 13, 1954 Vol VII No 6 \$10 year The Week New York City Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Week

Sing Me No Lullaby-Phoenix 10/14. Norris Houghton & T. Edward Hambleton present new play by Robert Ardrey with Richard Kiley, Beatrice Straight, Jessie Royce Landis. Staged by Paul Stewart... I Feel Wonderful-De Lys 10/18. Sidney S Oshrin presents new musical revue by Jerry Herman & Barry Alan Grael... Slightly Delinquent-Blackfriars' 10/18. Blackfriars Guild present a new comedy by Leo Thomas... Sands of Negev-President 10/19. B & J Rothman present Israeli play in English directed by Boris Tumarin with Celia Adler, Peter Capell... Peter Pan-Winter Garden 10/20. Richard Halliday presents musical version of Barrie play directed by Jerome Robbins with Mary Martin, Cyril Ritchard.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Reclining Figure-Lyceum 10/7/54. Majority of NY daily reviewers enjoyed Harry Kurnitz comedy directed by Abe Burrows and produced by Martin Gabel & Henry Margolis. Herald Tribune and Post critics didn't think comedy with Georgiann Johnson, Mike Wallace and Martin Gabel was funny fast enough or long enough. Other reviews ranged from an outright rave by Coleman, Mirror, to luke-warm notices filed by Atkinson, Times, and Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Most agreed with Times man who praised author's sharp wit more than his playwrighting ability. Percy Waram as an eccentric art collector who applause of all. McClain, Journal American, scored it as a near miss all around. Kerr, Herald Tribune, summed up his opinion as simply a comedy that has nothing wrong with it except that it isn't very funny. Watts, Post, also felt comedy was witty, but not funny.

Blues, Ballads and Sin-Songs-Bijou 10/4/54 -10/16/54. Libby Holman's one woman show was enjoyed by most of the critics, but few felt it was "theatre." Atkinson Times, rated it as concert, actually a pretty monotonous performance in a theatre. Kerr, Herald Tribune, found a studied and terribly private quality about the proceedings which he bets all except her fans will tire of shortly. Both Chapman, News and Kerr were upset by the extended use of the singer's sole prop, a chair. Coleman, Mirror, thought it was an original and rather highbrow evening with limited appeal. Watts, Post, compared event to an evening's social gathering minus drinks. Gerald Cook was credited by all with fine accompaniment job. The final unlisted encore of the singer's most famous songs including "Body and Soul" were enjoyed the most on the long program of 20 songs.

The Clandestine Marriage-Provincetown 10/2/54. Five NYC daily reviewers approved of Players Theatre presentation of David Garrick's comedy directed by Jack Landau with Frederic Warriner, Jacqueline Brookes and Sylvia Short. Shanley, Times, rated it as a flimsy bit of foolery endowed with some highly entertaining moments. Kerr, Herald Tribune, praised cast for fine handling of 18th century stylized comedy. Coleman, Mirror, also praised cast for making a genuine contribution to our theatre. Herridge, Post, okayed it for serious drama students only. Hawkins, WT & S,

Noah-Broadway Tabernacle 10/10/54. Andre Obey's play revived by Broadway Chapel Players was okayed by Shanley, Times, and Hawkins, WT&S, as effective religious drama. Latter thought actors posed, but will relax, while animals were rated charming

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 ' Off Broadway '
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Ring Round the Moon will be presented Oct 16-17, 22-24 by 8 40 Theatre, West Side YMCA 5 West 63...Showcase Theatre presents Mr and Mrs North at Finch College with Philip Faversham, Sylvia Leigh... Group One will present Ronald Cross' play If I Were You Oct 25 At Amato Playhouse...Players Theatre hunting for a house to move Clandestine Marriage after Nov 7...Zero Hostel has replaced Everett Slocane, A Stone for Danny Fisher...Equity Library Theatre third bill of season will be The Doughgirls opening Nov 17...Plans for Ensemble are temporarily in abeyance, Joseph Kramm told NY Times...Beyond The Horizon will play weekends at Green Room Studio, 145 Bleecker starting Oct 15... A concert reading of Murder in the Cathedral will be held Sun, Oct 17 at YMHA, 92nd St-Lexington...The Glass Menagerie plays Oct 12-14 at Amato Playhouse.

Stephanie, a new play by Gil Orlowitz presenting at Amato Playhouse and presented by Group One is so stilted in what it is trying to do, pans Geor, Variety, that after a few minutes nobody cares.

World of Sholom Aleichem, which resumed a limited 3 week run at Barbizon Plaza prior to national tour starting Oct 20 in Hartford, has lost none of its outstanding qualities, notably humor, warmth, insight and good taste, raves Jess, Variety.

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 ' West Coast '
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Players Stage Theatre opens Oct 14 at their new house, 6111 West 5th St, LA with M. Manning's tragi-comedy The Fatal Party. Performances will be given Thur Through Suns...Helen Hayes will give an extra performance Oct 18 of What Every Woman Knows at Hartford Theatre, LA... Following Hayes production new theatre will house Hume Cronyn-Jessica Tandy in Face to Face, and will follow that with a 4 week engagement of Sailor's Delight with Eva Gabor opened Nov 15.

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 ' Yiddish Theatre '
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Will They Remember musical opened season at Brooklyn Parkway Theatre. Wilken, News, was surprised to find that the show offered a few hours of happy entertainment. Reviewer credits management with having the sense to bring together just the right performers, just the right numbers, and for a change, a nicely integrated script. Miriam Kresyn and Edmund Zayenda star.

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 ' Vaudeville '
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Tom Patricola, Jr heads new Palace show which includes Cy Reeves, Martin Florenz, Benson and Mann, Billy Sheppard, Four Colleanos, Trini & Manola, Yokoi Troupe.

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 ' Theatre Record Comments '
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"Noel and Gertie", RCA Victor LP of Noel Coward songs sung by Coward, Gertie Lawrence, and Yvonne Printemps, was rated a solid legit item by Abel, Variety. Coward, trade editor notes, is a shade above Irving Berlin's pipe-squeak tremolo tenor, and adds that with the melody selected even Nick Kenny's old sailor dubious basso profundo couldn't ruin the tunes.

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 ' Theatre Film Comments '
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"Romeo and Juliet" new British film with Laurence Harvey, Flora Robson and Mervyn Johns was highly rated at its London debut by Myro, Variety. Performances by Harvey and Susan Shentall are models of integrity and in the true classical tradition. Backgrounds in the 138 minute film produced by J.Arthur Rank were filmed in Italy.

Green Room Department

PREVIEWERS PANNED...Preview audiences, free and/or paid, are bad from the standpoint of the directors or actors seeking audience reactions, explained McHarry, News. These audiences usually don't react, and if they do, they react in the wrong spots for the wrong things. One press agent told the reporter this happens because they haven't been told beforehand by the critics if the play is good or bad.

COLUMN TIP...Shubert Alley is breathing easier now that a Main Stem star is back on the wagon, reports Kilgallen.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Julie Andrews, The Boy Friend, resembles Barbara Newberry more than she does Marilyn Miller, remarks Watts, Post...If McClain, Journal American, wants 6 PM curtains on opening nights, Chapman, News, suggests the extra time saved by used to sleep off a show before reviewing it....Through the years the defensively blown-up reasons why a would-be playwrights script is not produced remain similar, points out Burr, Playbill. Despite the balm with which they grease the playwright's aching heart, they were silly then--and they are silly now.

BETSY'S SIDE...If anything the "mickey" given onstage by Betsy Von Furstenburg, recently of Oh Men, Oh Women, to Tony Randall should have jarred him wide awake rather than cause him to pucker up and feel faint, agrees Farrell, World Telegram & Sun. The drink is a recognized pickup for hangovers. Actress did admit to columnists that she called Randall a pompous ass on stage when he allegedly blocked her way for a curtain call.

GESTURES-PRO & CON...Two letter writers to Times Drama Mailbag took issue with Fitzroy Davis' article on gestures in the theatre. Robert Downing agrees that the sadly curtailed use of gestures is part of the general decline of excitement on the modern stage, while Catherine Orloff suggests that Davis misused the theories of Stanislavski in his piece.

WHO'S KIDDING WHOM...If The Boy Friend were to have been concocted by and produced by college boys in a NY hotel ballroom it would have given rise to the condescending reviews usual to such occasions, bets Nathan, Journal American. But the difference is that many college shows have been immeasurably better than this alleged professional one.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...George Balanchine who has done the choreography for On Your Toes insists the story is more modern today than in 1936, he told Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. He considers the score one of America's best.

Pros & Cons by T M K

Reclining Figure is one of the wittiest scripts presented on Broadway in some time. The impersonations of the older characters are just about perfect, while the younger roles are neither as meaty or as well carried off. The polished wit of the script is aimed at the art world, but applies to any field which is divided between amateurs and professionals. It is good, though sometimes slow moving, fun.

Blues, Ballads and Sin Songs can be recommended ONLY to Libby Holman fans. Those too young to have heard her in her prime, or those who didn't care for her then are advised to seek their evenings entertainment elsewhere. The "blues" section of the concert is well done, but scarcely an excuse for a full evening in the theatre.

The U.S. Supreme Court will consider the Shubert anti-trust case about the last week in October. The Federal government charges the Shubert interests with monopolistic control of NY and out of town legit theatres. The Justice Department is appealing the NY Federal Court action which threw the case out of court in 1953.

Plays

Home is the Hero closed...Libby Holman extended her run a second week at Bijou...Lunatics and Lovers moved opening NY date to Dec 13...The Shoemaker's Children which tests Oct 25 at Bucks County will open in NY Dec 3...The Flowering Peach, Clifford Odets play on Noah, will open in NY Dec 6...Goldilocks book will be written by Walter & Jean Kerr, no composer set for Merrick-Mielziner musical...Stars in a Person's Backyard, a first play by Jay Presson will open in NY the week of Dec 19.

People

Clare Tree Major, producer and founder of Children's Theatre, died at age 74... Patrick O'Neal has replaced Tony Randall, Oh Men, Oh Women...Patty Foster has replaced Mary Lee Dearing, Anniversary Waltz... Avon Long has replaced Alenzo Bosan, Mrs. Patter Son...Donna Pearson has replaced Helva More, Fifth Season...Mai Zetterling will be co-starred in Tonight in Siam and with Paul Henreid... Mary Anderson will have a leading role in Lunatics and Lovers... Tyrone Power will co-star with Katharine Cornell in The Dark is Light Enough.

Award Department

Miriam Burton, an understudy in By The Beautiful Sea, won \$1000 Marian Anderson Scholarship Fund competition. Reri Grist and Lee Cass tied for second prizes of \$500. The competition was held in Philadelphia.

Other Broadways

Williams College, Williamstown, Mass., will allow the use of its theatre for a summer playhouse next season by David C Bryant, Jr who will head group of recent drama school graduates...The Fourposter was altered in Ottawa showing to pass local censor's rules...The Girl on Via Flaminia starts a pre London tryout Oct 11.

Theatre Book Notes

"Son of Oscar Wilde" by Vyvyan Holland has been published by Dutton... "Plays and Players" by Bernard Shaw has been published by Oxford in a World Classics edition

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First Class Mail

